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Questions relating to information

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Mr. Graham **Maitland** (South Africa)

I. Introduction

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2001, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-sixth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 18th to 20th meetings, on 19 and 20 November 2001 (see A/C.4/56/SR.18-20).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Information on its twenty-third session;[1]

(b) Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/411);

(c) Statement of the programme budget implications of draft resolution B, contained in document A/56/21/Add.1, submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (A/C.4/56/L.19).

4. At the 18th meeting, on 19 November, the representative of Egypt, the Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of the Committee and the proposals contained therein[2] (see A/C.4/56/SR.18).

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* and addendum (A/56/21 and Add.1).

[2] Ibid., *Supplement No. 21*, para. 70, and A/56/21/Add.1, para. 9.

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5. At the same meeting, the representative of Venezuela, Chairman of the Committee on Information, made a statement (see A/C.4/56/SR.18).

6. At that meeting also, the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information made a statement (see A/C.4/56/SR.18).

7. At the 19th meeting, on 20 November, the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information made a further statement (see A/C.4/56/SR.19).

II. Consideration of proposals contained in the report of the Committee on Information

A. Draft resolutions

8. At its 20th meeting, on 20 November, following statements by the representatives of the United States of America, Canada and Japan, the Committee adopted, without a vote, draft resolution A, contained in paragraph 70 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/56/21) and draft resolution B, contained in paragraph 9 of the addendum to the report of the Committee on Information (A/56/21/Add.1) (see para. 10).

B. Draft decision

9. At its 20th meeting, on 20 November, the Committee adopted, without a vote, the draft decision contained in paragraph 70 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/56/21) (see para. 11).

III. Recommendations of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

10. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

A
Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[3]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,[4]

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[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* and addendum (A/56/21 and Add.1).

[4] A/56/411.

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim at, in addition to bilateral cooperation, providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication[5] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

B
United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reiterating its decision to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to it relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Concurring with the view of the Secretary-General that public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations, and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, in accordance with the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in order to create broad-based global support for the United Nations,

Stressing that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency,

Expressing its concern that the gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and the developing countries has continued to widen and that vast segments of the population in developing countries are not benefiting from the present information and technology revolution and, in this regard, underlining the necessity of rectifying the imbalances of the global information and technology revolution in order to make it more just, equitable and effective,

Recognizing that developments in the information and communication technology revolution open vast new opportunities for economic growth and social development and can play an important role in the eradication of poverty in developing countries and, at the same time, emphasizing that it also poses challenges and risks and could lead to further widening of disparities between and within countries,

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[5] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980*, vol. 1, *Resolutions*, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

Stating that the present developments and rapid changes in the field of information and communication technology have a tremendous impact on the functioning of the United Nations and the Department of Public Information in particular, which may necessitate suitable adjustments in the manner in which the mandate of the Department is implemented,

Noting other initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide, including those by the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the Digital Opportunity Task Force of the Group of Eight Nations and the Group of 77 South Summit,

Recalling its resolutions 50/11 of 2 November 1995, 52/23 of 25 November 1997 and 54/64 of 6 December 1999 on multilingualism, and emphasizing the importance of making appropriate use of the official languages in the activities of the Department of Public Information, seeking to reduce the gap between the use of English and the other five official languages,

Stating that the Secretary-General should continue to enhance the effectiveness of the activities of the Department of Public Information,

Welcoming Armenia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to membership in the Committee on Information,

I. Introduction

1. *Reaffirms* its resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, in which it established the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, and all other relevant General Assembly resolutions related to the activities of the Department of Public Information;

2. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to continue to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993 and other mandates as established by the General Assembly;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/234 of 23 December 2000, as a guideline that sets out the overall orientation of the public information programme for the Organization's goals through effective communication;

4. *Welcomes* the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[6] the ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2000[7] and the Secretary-General's millennium report,[8] which indicate clearly that there is a great amount of hope and concern in the field of information and communications;

5. *Calls upon* States, in accordance with their laws, to make every effort to prevent the use of the traditional media and new information and communication technologies that undermine legitimate Governments and democracy, fan ethnic

[6] Resolution 55/2.

[7] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/55/3), chap. III, para. 17.

[8] A/54/2000.

strife and xenophobia, incite hatred and violence and contribute to any manifestations of extremism;

6. *Acknowledges* the important work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its collaboration with news agencies and broadcasting organizations in developing countries in disseminating information on priority issues;

II. General activities of the Department of Public Information

7. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information is the focal point for information policies of the United Nations and the primary news centre for information about the United Nations and its activities and those of the Secretary-General;

8. *Welcomes* the development of the United Nations News Service by the Department of Public Information, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations web site and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

9. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications,[9] encourages him to continue the reorientation exercise, while stressing the need to take into account the views of Member States, and requests him to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

10. *Emphasizes* that, through its reorientation, the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation contributes to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications;

11. *Concurs* with the view of the Secretary-General that the development of a strategic vision linking all the components of the Secretariat with emphasis on planning cooperation within the Organization constitutes the central element for continuing reorientation, and encourages the Department of Public Information to maintain, improve and expand its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries;

12. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to strengthen the cooperation between the Department of Public Information and other departments of the Secretariat, in particular those dealing with priority issues;

13. *Welcomes* the initiatives that have been taken by the Department of Public Information to strengthen the public information system of the United Nations, and, in this regard, stresses the importance of a coherent and results-oriented approach being undertaken by the United Nations, the specialized agencies

[9] A/AC.198/2001/2.

and the programmes and funds of the United Nations system involved in public information activities and the provision of resources for their implementation, and that this be done taking into account feedback from Member States on the relevance and effectiveness of its programme delivery;

14. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to continue to ensure the greatest possible access for United Nations guided tours and to ensure that displays in public areas are kept as informative, up-to-date, relevant and as technologically innovative as possible;

15. *Recognizes* the need for the Department of Public Information to increase its outreach activities in all regions, requests the Secretary-General to include, in his next report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, an analysis of the present reach and scope of the Department's activities, identifying the widest possible spectrum of audiences and geographical areas which are not covered adequately and which may require special attention, including the appropriate means of communication, and bearing in mind local language requirements;

III. Multilingualism and public information

16. *Emphasizes* the importance of ensuring the full, equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all activities of the Department of Public Information, and also stresses the importance of fully implementing its resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, in section C of which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the texts of all new public documents in all six official languages, and information materials of the United Nations are made available through the United Nations web site daily and are accessible to Member States without delay;

17. *Requests* the Secretary-General to present updated figures on the use and command of all six official languages by the Department of Public Information staff to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

18. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information has appropriate staffing capacity in all official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities;

19. *Reminds* the Secretary-General of the need to include in future programme budget proposals for the Department of Public Information the importance of using all six official languages in its activities;

20. *Takes note* of the Internet Publishing Guidelines and in this regard requests the Department of Public Information and the Working Group on Internet Matters to include in these guidelines specific recommendations towards achieving the goal of making all documentation on the web sites available in all six official languages of the Organization;

IV. Promotional campaigns

21. *Recalls* its resolutions 53/202 of 17 December 1998 and 54/254 of 15 March 2000, concerning the designation of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly as the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations and the convening, as an integral part of the Millennium Assembly, of the Millennium Summit of the

United Nations, takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the millennium promotional campaign,[10] and commends the Department of Public Information for the important role that it played in implementing the promotional campaign;

22. *Appreciates* the Secretary-General's initiatives in promoting 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and, mindful of the importance of drawing international attention to the impact that dialogue among civilizations could have on promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, encourages the Secretary-General to intensify the promotional campaign through the use of as many broadcasters and languages, in addition to the official languages, as possible, to spread the coverage, with special emphasis on publicizing the findings of the Group of Eminent Persons for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

23. *Recalls* paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 55/47 of 29 November 2000, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010", and, in this context, encourages the Department of Public Information to undertake specific dissemination of information on a culture of peace, keeping in mind the ongoing Decade;

24. *Recognizes* the need for enhanced publicity through a targeted strategy to be developed by the Department of Public Information on the special sessions and conferences, including on the least developed countries, children, illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, HIV/AIDS, racism, the environment, financing of development, sustainable development, and ageing, which will address issues crucial to the international community, particularly the developing countries, as well as on the ongoing Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary action in this regard and report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the context of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;

25. *Recalls* its resolutions 53/59 B of 3 December 1998 and 54/82 B of 6 December 1999, and urges the Department of Public Information to take the necessary measures, through the provision of relevant and objective information, towards achieving the major objectives set forth in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa,[11] and to publicize the activities of the open-ended working group established for that purpose;

26. *Also recalls* its resolutions concerning the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, in particular resolutions 51/138 of 13 December 1996 and 52/172 of 16 December 1997, and encourages the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of the consequences of that disaster;

[10] A/AC.198/2000/10.

[11] A/52/871-S/1998/318.

27. *Further recalls* its resolution 55/44 of 27 November 2000, concerning international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, which has been affected by nuclear tests, and encourages the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of the problems and needs of the Semipalatinsk region;

V. Bridging the digital divide

28. *Commends* the Secretary-General for the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force with a view to bridging the digital divide and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, welcomes the contribution of the Department of Public Information in publicizing the efforts of the Secretary-General in closing the digital divide as a means of spurring economic growth and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, and, in this context, requests the Department further to enhance its role;

VI. United Nations information centres

29. *Stresses* that the United Nations information centres and information components should continue to play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization to the peoples of the world, in particular in the areas of economic and social development;

30. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme: implementation of the views of host Governments",[12] welcomes the action taken by the Department of Public Information to implement the views of those host Governments as expressed in their replies to the questionnaire provided by the Secretariat, and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps for the continued implementation of those views and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

31. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session on any possible proposal to continue, if feasible and on a case-by-case basis, the integration policy in a cost-effective manner, while maintaining the operational and functional independence of United Nations information centres, taking into account the views of the host countries to ensure that the information functions and the autonomy of United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, to meet the policy's stated objective of improving the provision of information by the United Nations;

32. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to include in his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, to be submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session, information on the involvement of the Department of Public Information in the context of the implementation of his recommendations on the establishment of United Nations houses;

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[12] A/AC.198/2001/4.

33. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the equitable disbursement of resources to United Nations information centres,[13] emphasizes that further efforts are needed to ensure the most equitable disbursement possible of resources to United Nations information centres, and stresses that particular attention should be paid to the concerns of developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition;

34. *Emphasizes* that the United Nations information centres, as the "field voice" of the Department of Public Information, should promote public awareness and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, and recognizes the appeal made by the Secretary-General to the host Governments of United Nations information centres to facilitate the work of the centres in their countries by the provision of rent-free or rent-subsidized office space, while taking into account the economic condition of the host Governments and bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial requirements for the United Nations information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

35. *Reaffirms* that the United Nations information centres should continue to publicize United Nations activities and accomplishments in the areas of economic and social development, poverty eradication, debt relief, health, education, the elimination of illiteracy, women's rights, children's rights, the plight of children in armed conflict, the sexual exploitation of children, the eradication of drug trafficking, environmental issues, peace and security, and other relevant issues;

36. *Also reaffirms* the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres, invites the Secretary-General to make such recommendations as he may consider necessary regarding the establishment and location of such centres, and, in this regard, welcomes the requests by the Governments of Croatia, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Jamaica and Kyrgyzstan for information centres or information components;

37. *Takes note* of the efforts by some United Nations information centres to develop their own web pages in local languages, and, in this respect, encourages the Department of Public Information to provide resources and technical facilities, in particular to United Nations information centres whose web pages are not yet operational, to develop web pages in the respective local languages of their host countries, and encourages host Governments to respond to the needs of United Nations information centres;

VII. Role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping

38. *Takes note with appreciation* of the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the establishment and day-to-day functioning of the information components of peacekeeping and other field operations of the United Nations, and requests the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department from the planning stage of such future operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other departments of the Secretariat, in particular with the of Peacekeeping Operations, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at

[13] A/AC.198/2001/5.

its twenty-fourth session, including any possible proposals for enhancing the role of the Department in this regard;

39. *Notes* the ongoing discussion on the report of the Secretary-General on resource requirements for implementation of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,[14] and, in this regard, stresses that the Department of Public Information should continue its efforts to strengthen its capacity to significantly contribute to the functioning of information components in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the report requested in paragraph 38 above;

40. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information in the field of peacekeeping operations and its role in the selection process of spokespersons for United Nations peacekeeping operations or missions, and, in this regard, encourages the Department to second spokespersons who have the necessary skills to fulfil the tasks of the operations or missions, and to consider views expressed, especially by host countries, when appropriate, in this regard;

VIII. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

41. *Takes note* of the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Dag Hammarskjöld Library a virtual library with world outreach, making United Nations information and other acquired materials accessible electronically to a growing number of readers and users, and, at the same time, requests the Secretary-General to enrich on a multilingual basis the stock of books and journals in the Library, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues, to ensure that the Library continues to be a broadly accessible resource for information about the United Nations and its activities;

42. *Encourages* the Dag Hammarskjöld Library to alert its clientele, including Member States through their missions, for example, via electronic mail, of any new publications and collections;

43. *Welcomes* the training courses conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for the representatives of Member States and Secretariat staff on Cyberseek, web search, the Intranet, United Nations documentation, UN-I-QUE and the optical disk system, and, in that regard, encourages the Library to further develop such courses;

44. *Also welcomes* the role of the Department of Public Information in fostering increased collaboration among libraries of the United Nations system, particularly in establishing one central system-wide online catalogue that will allow for the searching of the bibliographic records of all print holdings of all United Nations system libraries and the searching of all electronic holdings and electronic databases maintained by all United Nations system libraries, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the context of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;

[14] A/55/507 and Add.1.

45. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to ensure the continued development of the integrated library system in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the context of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;

IX. Traditional means of communication: radio, television and publications

46. *Welcomes* the progress report[15] and the final report[16] of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations, and also welcomes the extensive network of partnerships established with local, national and regional broadcasters in Member States, and concurs with the Secretary-General that the project has contributed to the overall goal of the Department of Public Information of generating understanding about the United Nations among millions of listeners across the globe and has been one of the more successful examples of the reorientation of the Department;

47. *Decides*, building upon the success of the pilot project as well as the scope of its programme distribution and established partnerships, to expand the international radio broadcasting capacity of the United Nations in all six official languages;

48. *Requests* the Secretary-General to convey the necessary justification of the resource requirements, including information on the possibility of extrabudgetary financing and/or the redeployment of resources, concerning the expansion of the international radio broadcasting capacity for the biennium 2002-2003 for consideration by the relevant committees of the General Assembly;

49. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session, including information that can be obtained from the local, national and regional radio partners about the estimated number of listeners reached, in order for the Committee to decide on the future of this capacity;

50. *Stresses* that radio remains one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching traditional media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, such as development and peacekeeping, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/44 B;

51. *Takes note* of the efforts under way by the Department of Public Information to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations all over the world in the six official languages as well as in other languages, and, in that regard, stresses the need for impartiality and objectivity concerning information activities of the United Nations;

52. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, in view of the need for efficiency and for a wider dissemination of information services of the United Nations Radio, to enhance where necessary the use of non-official languages to meet the information needs of its audiences;

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[15] A/AC.198/2001/17.

[16] A/AC.198/2001/10.

53. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to include in its radio and television programming specific programmes addressing the needs of developing nations;

54. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Department of Public Information for the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition, and calls for its further continuation along the lines of its current implementation, while including a larger number of trainees from those countries;

55. *Emphasizes* that all publications of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with existing mandates, should fulfil an identifiable need, should not duplicate other publications of the United Nations system and should be produced in a cost-effective manner;

X. United Nations web site

56. *Notes*, while appreciating current efforts, that there is a need for the Secretary-General to continue to develop proposals for the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in order to ultimately lead to achieving full parity among the official languages of the United Nations, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

57. *Requests* the Secretary-General in the meantime and until a decision has been taken on the proposals to be presented for the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site, to ensure, to the extent possible, while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate web site, the equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations web site among all official languages on a continuous basis;

58. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, as the manager of the Organization's web site, to take the lead in developing a proposal for the establishment of one central Internet portal that will encompass all web sites of the United Nations system, preferably through system-wide cooperation, and that will allow for the search and retrieval of information from all web sites in the United Nations system from one central search facility, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the context of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;

59. *Stresses* the importance of access to United Nations Treaty Collection and United Nations parliamentary documentation for the public;

60. *Commends* the efforts of the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services in ensuring that the required technological infrastructure is in place to accommodate the imminent linkage of the optical disk system to the United Nations web site;

61. *Recognizes* the far-reaching impact that the linking of the optical disk system with the United Nations web site will have in furthering the goals of the Organization by making all parliamentary documents in the six official languages publicly available, and stresses that the integration of the optical disk system with

the United Nations web site will represent one of the steps towards significantly enhancing the multilingual nature of the United Nations web site and will lead to efficiencies in all Secretariat departments;

62. *Takes note with interest* of the electronic mail-based news alert service distributed worldwide by the Department of Public Information, and emphasizes that extra care needs to be taken to ensure that news-breaking stories and news alerts are accurate, impartial and free of any bias;

63. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to continue to take full advantage of recent developments in information technology, including the Internet, in order to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the expeditious dissemination of information on the United Nations, in accordance with the priorities established by the General Assembly and taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

64. *Encourages* an increase in the number of programmes of United Nations Radio, in all available languages, on the United Nations web site;

XI. Final remarks

65. *Recognizes* the need for constructive interaction between the management of the Department of Public Information and members of the Committee on Information, and requests the Department to arrange, in consultation with the Chairman, informal meetings with the members of the Committee every three months to discuss the ongoing work of the Department, and in this regard requests the Department, in preparation for these meetings, to invite members of the Committee, no later than two weeks prior to their convening, to propose topics for discussion;

66. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

67. *Requests* the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session;

68. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-seventh session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

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11. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the number of members of the Committee on Information from 96 to 98 and to appoint Azerbaijan and Monaco as members of the Committee.